

down to the present day—into a hundred equal parts, and if then, corresponding to the thickness of the systems of strata, we calculate the relative duration of the time of the five main divisions or periods according to percentages, we obtain the following result:—

I.	Archilithic, or primordial period	.	.	.	53.6
II.	Palæolithic, or primary period	32.1
III.	Mesolithic, or secondary period	.	.	.	11.5
IV.	Cænolithic, or tertiary period	2.3
V.	Anthropolithic, or quaternary period	.	.	.	0.5
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Total ...					100.0

According to this, the length of the archilithic period, during which no land-living animals or plants as yet existed, amounts to more than one half, more than 53 per cent.; on the other hand the length of the anthropolithic era, during which man has existed, amounts to scarcely one-half per cent. of the whole length of the organic history of the earth. It is, however, quite impossible to calculate the length of these periods, even approximately, by years.

The thickness of the strata of mud at present deposited during a century, and which has been used as a basis for this calculation, is of course quite different in different parts of the earth under the different conditions in which these deposits take place. It is very slight at the bottom of the deep sea, in the beds of broad rivers with a short course, and in inland seas which receive very scanty supplies of water. It is comparatively great on the sea-shores exposed to strong breakers, at the estuaries of large rivers with long courses, and in inland seas with copious supplies of water. At the mouth of the Mississippi, which carries with it a consider-